CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.856
17 August 2000

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 17 August 2000, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Celso Amorim (Brazil)

GE.00-63057 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 856th plenary meeting of the Conference.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Kazakhstan and Romania. I give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan, Ambassador Nurlan Danenov.

Mr. DANENOV (Kazakhstan) (translated from Russian): Sir, first allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. It is our hope that your experience and dynamic approach will play an important role in moving our work forward and the delegation of the Republic of Kazakhstan would like to assure you of its full support in your efforts here in the Conference.

I would also like to note the untiring efforts of the Secretary-General of the Conference and the personal representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Petrovsky and his deputy, Mr. Adelkader Bensmail, in keeping the work of the Conference on track.

Until now I have refrained from taking the floor before my distinguished colleagues in the Conference on Disarmament. In doing so I was abiding by an Eastern tradition. The essence of that tradition is that when people get together in order to discuss any problem or to exchange views on a particular issue, the newcomer is obliged first to listen to the views of the more senior and more experienced speakers before saying his piece. I believe that was a sound and worthwhile decision on my part. Within this representative forum we have heard a wealth of useful information, analysis and proposals provided by the distinguished ambassadors; all matters worthy of our careful attention and study.

Unfortunately, when we took up their consideration we were unable to reach consensus and these constructive ideas were never implemented in practice. On the one hand, this raised a host of entirely understandable questions and, on the other, it also bore out the incontrovertible fact that it is very difficult to overcome accretions of distrust, to relinquish stereotypes and inertia in one's thought processes. Clearly, in the twenty-first century, progress towards a safer, more stable world will remain one of the most complex and responsible tasks facing the international community.

At this meeting, I have a fairly modest task to perform: I would like to draw the attention of delegations here in the Conference to the fact that, on 29 July 2000 in the former Semipalatinsk testing ground in the Degelen mountains an explosion was conducted of 100 metric tons of granulotol resulting in the destruction of the last horizontal tunnel intended for nuclear weapons tests.

This was the third in the series of Kazakh-United States calibrating experiments conducted at the test site.

At the same time as destroying the horizontal tunnel, the experimental explosion was used to test and calibrate the international nuclear test monitoring system under the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, to which the Republic of Kazakhstan is also a party.

(Mr. Danenov, Kazakhstan)

The information gained from these experiments will enable the international community to detect and more accurately identify nuclear explosions, (distinguishing them from earthquakes and explosions using conventional explosives) and thereby ensure effective monitoring of compliance with the provisions of CTBT and to set in place the sort of monitoring systems which would make it impossible for nuclear weapons to be tested anywhere in the world without the international community finding out about them.

The "Omega-3" experiment is of special significance as it has successfully rounded off the five-year programme to eliminate the whole infrastructure for nuclear-weapons testing, comprising the closure of the horizontal tunnels and the destruction of the vertical shafts at the Semipalatinsk test site.

On 2 August 2000 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan issued a statement, the text of which I have handed to the Secretary of the Conference requesting that it be published as an official document of the Conference.

The closure of the Semipalatinsk test site and Kazakhstan's renunciation of all forms of nuclear weapons represented a natural choice for a country which has suffered so much from nuclear-weapons testing.

Allow me to remind the members of the Conference that Kazakhstan demonstrated its commitment to the task of ridding the world of its nuclear weapons by acceding in December 1993 to NPT as a non-nuclear State. Recognizing the urgent need for a comprehensive strengthening of the non-proliferation regime, in 1996 Kazakhstan signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty.

Completion of the above-mentioned programme has yet again emphatically demonstrated to the world Kazakhstan's readiness to abide firmly by its international obligations and to play a practical role in enhancing the monitoring of compliance with the provisions of CTBT.

The admission of the Republic of Kazakhstan one year ago as a member of the Conference on Disarmament was seen by us as a clear sign of approval by the international community of the responsible position taken by our country in the field of disarmament and a reflection of our involvement in the process of ridding mankind of the nuclear threat.

In 1999 and during the 2000 session of the Conference, much concern has been expressed at the state of affairs here in the Conference. Some very specific proposals have been made in respect of the programme of work and attempts have been made to get our work back on track. We support these efforts and it is our hope that in the very near future the Conference will be able to start discussing some of its substantive issues. We must be ready for this event and it would therefore make sense to begin work immediately on some of the more urgent issues without focusing exclusively on any one of them, however important it might be.

(Mr. Danenov, Kazakhstan)

In May 1998, here in this Conference, the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, Mr. Kassymzhomart Tokaev, set out the position of our country with regard to all aspects of the strengthening of global and regional security. I would now just like to note the following.

- Kazakhstan would like to see a negotiating process start as soon as possible on the agenda of this forum. In this connection, we support the proposals which have already been made by a number of distinguished heads of delegation on the creation of subsidiary bodies on such items of the Conference's agenda as "Cessation of the arms race and nuclear disarmament", "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" and "Prohibition of the production of fissile material". This was also stressed by the head of the Kazakh delegation at the New York NPT conference in April 2000.

- In addition, we believe that the NPT Treaty is the sole multilateral nuclear arms control agreement which binds all States to undertake the necessary measures to achieve nuclear disarmament. The problems of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons are interdependent, necessitating joint efforts by both nuclear and non-nuclear States to strengthen international security. We should here recall the special responsibility of the States in the nuclear club and the constructive position they have adopted in the Conference. The commitment of these States to the policy of nuclear disarmament should be given substance by specific convincing action. Only if that were to occur could we hope for a gradual strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

- Exceptional importance attaches to the continuation of the disarmament process, which to a great extent depends on the political will and the desire of all countries to pursue the search for constructive and mutually acceptable solutions relating, above all, to the entry into force of CTBT and the elaboration of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

- Time has shown that, notwithstanding the existence of multilateral treaties, the international arms control regime is very vulnerable. The slightest change in the prevailing international balance and stability could jeopardize the effectiveness of the international arms control regime as a whole.

The situation surrounding the ABM Treaty is therefore a matter of considerable concern, since for many years the ABM Treaty has underpinned the relative balance and stability in the world and has played a decisive role in curbing the arms race. For that reason, safeguarding the integrity of the Treaty and strict compliance with its provisions constitute an essential condition for the process of disarmament and the further reduction of strategic weapons, as stressed in the declaration of heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States on 21 June 2000 and the declaration, on 6 July 2000, of heads of State of the Shanghai Five, which includes Kazakhstan.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, the international community - already buffeted by various local wars, conflicts and acts of international terrorism - may well now also

(Mr. Danenov, Kazakhstan)

face the possible emergence of new nuclear threats. How ready are we today to make a thorough assessment of the nature and scale of these threats? To what extent can they be averted through bilateral and regional cooperation?

Faced with issues like this, we must also give careful thought to the advisability of preventive measures in respect of new threats, including in the context of preventing the use of nuclear materials for terrorist purposes.

It might be useful to keep in mind these particular concerns of States and peoples when pursuing further discussion in the Conference on Disarmament on the means of guaranteeing a safer and more stable world and global security and setting in place and strengthening the necessary international machinery for that purpose.

To conclude this statement, I would like to say the following.

Every year the resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly confirm the priority of nuclear disarmament issues. It goes without saying that, without specific action in this field, we cannot achieve the aims set before us.

Protracted discussion on the programme of work and the consequent stalling of this process have clearly detracted from the stature of the Conference on Disarmament as the international multilateral disarmament forum.

We understand that the Conference is trying to strike a balance between the national and multilateral efforts of States in order to ensure nuclear security. It is on the practical success of our efforts in this direction that our collective security depends.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Kazakhstan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Romania, Ambassador Ioan Maxim.

Mr. MAXIM (Romania): Mr. President, allow me, at the outset, to congratulate you most sincerely on your assumption of the important office of President of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you every success in your endeavours. I would also like to express my special appreciation to your predecessors for the intense efforts they made to move the Conference forward to substantive work.

I have asked for the floor in my personal capacity, as I am about to relinquish my post as head of the Romanian delegation to the Conference on Disarmament after two years during which our hopes to see this international body live up to its responsibilities as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament and international security have remained unfulfilled.

(Mr. Maxim, Romania)

While it is not my intention on this occasion to embark on a deep analysis of the present stalemate of the Conference, regrettably prolonged even after the successful conclusion of the NPT Review Conference, I would like to express some views on the need to change the course of the present situation in the Conference on Disarmament.

First, let me say that I share the views of other distinguished speakers that the time has come to examine in depth and discuss openly the present state of affairs in the Conference, in order to retain those options that will allow it to resume its substantive work both in the short and in the long term. Such an approach is perhaps more necessary at a time when one major item on which agreement exists - negotiations on FMCT - is predicated on the consensus solution of other contentious items.

For my delegation, starting negotiations on FMCT, while continuing the search for an agreed solution to the contentious items, facilitated by the positive contributions and flexibility of the most concerned delegations, remains a priority in the Conference on Disarmament.

Second, allow me to express the view that a continuation of the present state of affairs in the Conference might adversely affect other items in the programme of work on which agreement exists, with the emergence of new global and specific national security perceptions and concerns relating to developments in the international security environment. At the same time, prior experience has shown that items pertaining initially to the Conference on Disarmament have been approached, negotiated and settled in other forums and formats, thereby reducing the Conference's credibility.

In order to prevent such an outcome, as well as to be able to assess and improve awareness of possible developments in the areas covered by the generally agreed items, I share the view that the Conference on Disarmament should resume the substantive activity of its subsidiary bodies, thus enabling the Conference to resume its role as an active and valid instrument for the positive influence of the international security climate. Seeing the Conference on Disarmament only as a barometer of the state of international security is an expression of passivity and resignation which has proved of limited practical value for the cause of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons, an ideal to which our authorities and peoples are genuinely committed.

Mr. President, let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to his able deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, to all the members of the secretariat and the interpreters, as well as to all our colleagues for their valuable help, cooperation and friendship. It has been a privilege and a very special experience to have participated in the deliberations of the Conference.

I give you all my very best wishes and my hopes that the Conference will be able to embark without further delay on its substantive work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Romania for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I am sure that you all join me in extending to Ambassador Maxim and his family our best wishes for the future.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case. I would just like to say a few words.

At our plenary meeting last Thursday, I informed you of my efforts to build consensus on the programme of work of the Conference. Subsequently, I have presented my ideas in a very precise way to all groups and members. You are all aware of them. Yesterday's presidential consultations revealed that those ideas enjoyed wide support as a basis - and I stress, as a basis - for a process of intensified consultations with a view to reaching consensus on a programme of work. There was no negative reply to the specific question I presented. I therefore feel encouraged to intensify my efforts in the coming days with a view to further strengthening this positive trend and arriving at a satisfactory conclusion to our joint endeavours.

Of course, I am keenly aware that time is running out and I shall keep members apprised of my intentions.

The next plenary meeting for the Conference, and the last under my presidency, will be held on Thursday, 24 August 2000, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.